

Harbinger

JANUARY and FEBRUARY 2005

VOL. 19 NO. 1

Winter is for the birds. Let's face it. Even though each season is split equally into three-month segments, winter seems to last far longer than the other three. From the time the first frost appears and the leaves drop from the trees in October, it *feels* like winter even though the calendar doesn't mark its official arrival until late December. And why is it that February, the shortest month of the year, seems to last the longest? Maybe we're simply not adapted for winter. Taking our cue from the natural world around us, many of us simply try to just get through it as best we can. We attempt to stay warm, we don't venture out as often, and we wait for spring to arrive. It's no wonder the groundhog's emergence in February captures our attention as we anxiously await proof that we have survived yet another winter.

We have just the cure to help you not only survive winter, but to enjoy it as well. February is Family Month at the nature center and we have planned a great lineup of programs to encourage you and your family to venture out and take on February in style. The Emmy-award winning duo of Jan and George Syrigos will kickoff the Family Month program lineup on February 4, when they return with an all new Critter Rock concert featuring songs from their recently released *Wild Heart* CD. Kids will discover food chains while jamming to *Circle Cycle*, they'll migrate with the monarchs in *Journey Maker*, and classify

and identify animal groups moving to the rhythm of *Amphibian Blues* and *Buzzy Wuzzy*.

February is for the birds—owls, songbirds, and birds of prey, that is. Enjoy an indoor and guided outdoor *Owl Prowl* on February 11, as Dickerson Park Zoo volunteers introduce you to the wonders of these nighttime predators. Bird Bander and Conservation Department staff member Craig

Hensley will be here on Saturday, February 12, to capture and band songbirds. You'll get an opportunity to see many common feeder birds up close and personal. On February 18, Sarah McCoy of Pittsburg State University will show live birds of prey in the *Just Wingin' It* presentation.

The month ends on a historical note as we continue to recognize the bicentennial celebration of Lewis & Clark's journey to the Pacific Ocean and back with a *Family Fun Night: Lewis & Clark Style* on Friday,

February 25. Swap lives with

one of the members of the Corps of Discovery and see if you have what it takes to survive in Missouri two

hundred years ago.

Since there's no way to get to spring without having winter, we might as well make the most of it. And if owls can find something this winter to hoot about, maybe you can too.

FAMILY MONTH Returns



Emmy award-winning
Critter Rock artists,
Jan & George Syrigos



Their second CD, *Wild Heart*,
was released in December.

The View From The Bridge

The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to initiate change. As soon as you saw the newsletter, you undoubtedly noticed a transformation. Besides having a new look, we've expanded to a format that gives us more room for program descriptions and makes the print easier to read without increasing the mailing costs. You'll find all the information you've come to expect along with a new "Ask the Naturalist" column to address commonly asked questions about natural events. After reading the newsletter, the large inside page can be pulled out and kept as a program reference for two months. The popular Little Acorn classes for 3-6 year olds are still grouped together each month on the events page for ease in finding them. We hope you like the change and look forward to your comments.

Several other changes have recently taken place in personnel. Longtime Interpretive Programs Supervisor April Dozier was promoted to Nature Center Manager at the Cape Girardeau Conservation Campus, which is slated to open this spring. Before moving to the nature center just over five years ago, April served as Visitor Center Manager at the Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery and Conservation Center in Branson for seventeen years. April has been a great asset to the nature center and we are sorry to see her go. We know her great organizational skills and commitment to conservation education will make her an invaluable resource in opening a new facility, and we wish her well.

General Clerk Cole Chatman has been a familiar face at the front desk since September 2001. While finishing his bachelors degree in Wildlife Conservation and Management at SMSU, Cole has been honing his public relations skills and putting his conservation knowledge to task by answering questions from the public. His quick smile and great attitude are memorable and have won him recognition with the public on several occasions. Cole also taught Hunter Education courses on a voluntary basis and will be sorely missed in that capacity as well. Cole began academy training for the Missouri Water Patrol in January and we also wish him well in beginning his new career.

For as many changes as we've experienced, one thing will remain the same—our commitment to help Missourians connect with nature and conserve it, too.



Linda F. Chorice, Nature Center Manager

The Springfield Conservation Nature Center is located in southeast Springfield just west of US-65 off the James River Freeway (US-60). The area is open daily 8am to 9pm from March 1 to October 31, and 8am to 6pm during the remainder of the year. The building is open daily from 8am to 5pm year 'round. The building and area are closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. The area is closed to pets, bicycles, roller blades, hunting, fishing, collecting, and alcoholic beverages. No fees are charged.

Phone: 417/888-4237 Fax: 417/888-4241 <www.mdc.mo.gov/areas/cnc/springfd>

The Nature Nook

Gift Shop



In Focus

by Jim Rathert

Heritage card discount does not apply.

This book showcases the work of Conservation Department photographer Jim Rathert. For 19 years he's delighted *Missouri Conservationist* readers with exquisite photographs of wild Missouri.

Discounted price: \$14.40 plus tax.

Temporary Display

January/February

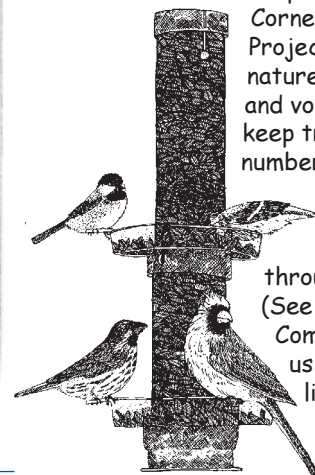
Varied Art Media to
Express the Natural World

William Woods University
Professor Terry Martin's Art Students

Project Feederwatch

Not only are we watching our winter birds but we're counting them as well.

As participants in Cornell University's Project FeederWatch, nature center staff and volunteers will keep track of the numbers of each bird species found at the feeders from late fall through the winter. (See schedule below.) Come on out and join us. Count if you like or just enjoy watching the birds.



Jan 4/5

Jan 18/19

Feb 1/2

Feb 15/16

March 1/2

March 15/16

March 29/30

Ask The Naturalist

Seasonal changes spark many questions. In this section, we will answer some common questions about natural events.

I have a hawk hanging around my bird feeders. Will it stay around permanently?

Sharp-shinned hawks and Cooper's hawks will occasionally visit your backyard where songbirds gather at feeders. Sometimes these hawks are successful predators on songbirds. You don't need to worry about them taking up permanent residence, however, this is just a temporary stop along their route in search of prey.

When do the eagles arrive and how long do they stay?

Missouri has about 200 resident bald eagles and that number increases to about 3,000 during the winter months. Migrating eagles begin arriving in December and start migrating back north in late February through March. The exact timing is dependent upon weather conditions.

When is a good time to start pruning trees and shrubs?

January and February are actually the best times to prune. Pruning done at this time minimizes damage and does not interrupt the natural growth cycle.

When should I put up my bluebird box?

Bluebirds begin searching for nesting locations as early as February and start nesting in March. Bluebirds also utilize bluebird boxes for roosting during cold wintry nights, so boxes can be of use for much of the year.

Chipping In . . .

Shane Thomas



What do howling coyotes, handling snakes, and speaking French have in common? They're all associated with Volunteer Naturalist Shane Thomas.

He can be described as a tall, lanky person with a flattop haircut who has been known to howl at the moon on occasion (while playing the part of the coyote during our Halloween event in October, that is). You may also find him handling a snake for an enthusiastic group of kids visiting the nature center. And, if you're lucky, he might speak to you in French (in which he happens to be fluent). These are just a few of the many hidden talents that may be revealed as you get to know him.

Shane grew up on a farm near Wichita, Kansas, and was introduced to the outdoors at an early age with hunting and fishing. He and his family later moved to Ozark, Missouri, where he finished high school. He attended college at SMSU and received his bachelor's degree in Wildlife Biology with a minor in French Education in May 2004. During this time, he spent one summer at the University of Southern Mississippi in Ocean Springs studying marine biology. He worked six years at Chuck E Cheese's, four as technical manager, while attending college. His motivation and personal interests led him to volunteer what little spare time he had.

He volunteered for a year doing animal care at Wonders of Wildlife and simultaneously assumed the duties as animal caretaker at the nature center in September 2003. His experience working with children at Chuck E Cheese's fits right in with the programs at the nature center. His interest in presenting programs led him to go through the nature center's Volunteer Naturalist program in the winter of 2004. He has presented snake programs and helped with the Conservation TEEN Club and For Adults Only programs. Shane has also participated in special events such as Insect-O-Rama, Eagle Days, and the nature center's 15th Anniversary.

His interest in amphibians and reptiles has grown since the time he caught his first snake. He's had various species of snakes as pets over the years until recently when his landlord wouldn't allow them and he was forced to give them away. His dedication to animal care was evident when he was working in Joplin and drove seventy-five miles to the nature center three times a week to continue his animal care duties.

Shane is currently pursuing his masters degree in Aquatic Biology at SMSU, working as an aquarist diver with live exhibits at Bass Pro Shops, and continuing to volunteer at the nature center. The next time you see Shane at the nature center you might see one of his many hidden talents and when you do, be sure to thank him for chipping in.

Thank You

We would like to thank Emily Aronis for donating a natural object and Elizabeth Short for helping with the newsletter.

Volunteer Milestones

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------|-----------|
| Charley Burwick | 4,000 Hours | Tracy Richter | 400 Hours |
| Mike Mihalik | 1,250 Hours | Andy Busch | 200 Hours |
| Doug Gilliam | 500 Hours | Mary Murphy | 200 Hours |

EAGLE

Saturday, January 22

9am-4pm

Sunday, January 23

11am-4pm

DAYS at
the
nature
center

- * Indoor program featuring
Phoenix, a live eagle from
the Dickerson Park Zoo.
- * Outdoor viewing opportunities



Harbinger

Springfield Conservation Nature Center
Missouri Department of Conservation
4600 South Chrisman
Springfield, MO 65804-4931
Phone 417/888-4237
Fax: 417/888-4241

[<http://www.MissouriConservation.org>](http://www.MissouriConservation.org)

PRSRT STD.
US Postage Paid
Jefferson City Mo
Permit 274

January Events

at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center

REGISTRATION

Call the nature center at **417/888-4237** on or after January 2 to register for January programs requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call to cancel so that someone on the waiting list may attend.

7 Owl Prowl Friday, 7-8:30pm

Nesting season comes early for owls, and they're already hooting in anticipation. Join us and the folks from Dickerson Park Zoo for a close-up look at live owls. After the indoor program, we'll head outside and try to call wild owls. Families. Registration required.

8 Hiked It . . . Liked It! Weekend Hike

Saturday, 9-11am

Enjoy a naturalist-guided hike. Families.



GPS For Beginners

Saturday, 1-4pm

Hand-held Global Positioning Systems have become more affordable and popular lately. If you're still in the dark about what GPS devices are or if you want to buy one but need more information, this program is for you. Join Corps of Engineers Ranger Tricia Tannehill as she explains the ins and outs of these useful devices during this hands-on course. Ages 12-adult. Registration required.

12 Story Time With Ms. Ladybug

Wednesday, 11-11:30am

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story and shares activities with your 2-6 year olds.

15 Hiking Club Saturday, 8am-5pm

Volunteer Naturalist Mike Mihalik will lead this winter hike along Stockton Lake. Meet at the nature center and carpool. Dress for the weather, pack a sack lunch, bring water, and wear sturdy hiking shoes. The hike is approximately five miles and of moderate difficulty. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

Take a walk in the woods this month to look for shed antlers from White-tailed Deer bucks.



22 Eagle Days Saturday, 9am-4pm

We're celebrating the annual return of bald eagles to Lake Springfield. This special event combines the indoor presence of Phoenix, a live eagle from Dickerson Park Zoo, with outdoor viewing opportunities. An indoor program will be held every hour on the hour from 9am to 3pm. Stop by anytime and plan to spend about two hours. Families.



25 Conservation Kids' Club Owl Prowl

Tuesday, 6-7:15pm or 6:30-7:45pm

This Owl Prowl's just for you (and your parent, too). Join us to learn all about owls. It's guaranteed to be a hoot! Dress warmly for a short night hike. Ages 7-12. Please, no younger siblings and only one adult per group of kids. Registration required.

28 Nature And The Arts The Fiddling Frenchman

Friday, 7-8pm

Pierre Cruzatte was another of the unique, intrepid explorers that joined the Lewis & Clark expedition. Known as the "One-Eyed Fiddler," Cruzatte was skilled both as a boatman and as a musician. Missouri Conservation Department Education Consultant and fiddler Michael Fraser will perform traditional tunes on the fiddle as he portrays Cruzatte during this entertaining presentation. Ages 15-adult. Registration required.

29 For Adults Only Bennett Spring Fly-Fishing Trip

Saturday, 9am-Noon

Members of the Missouri Trout Fishermen's Association will be present at Bennett Spring State Park for some first-hand fly-fishing instruction. It's catch-and-release season at the park—participants must have a fishing license and a \$7 trout permit. (Both are available at the park.) Bring your own equipment if you have it. A limited number of rods will be available for use. Participants need to meet at the Bennett Spring hatchery building at 9am (directions will be provided). Ages 18-adult. Registration required.



Conservation TEEN Club Fly-Fishing

Saturday, Noon-5pm

Spend a fun afternoon catch-and-release fly-fishing at Bennett Spring State Park. The Missouri Trout Fishermen's Association will be on hand to teach us the basics before we try to land a big one. Participants must purchase a fishing permit (if 16 or older) and \$7 trout permit (regardless of age). Equipment, lunch, and transportation will be provided. Ages 12-17. Registration required.

23 Eagle Days Sunday, 11am-4pm

We're celebrating the annual return of bald eagles to Lake Springfield. This special event combines the indoor presence of Phoenix, a live eagle from Dickerson Park Zoo, with outdoor viewing opportunities. An indoor program will be held every hour on the hour from 11am to 3pm. Stop by anytime and plan to spend about two hours. Families.

29 Owl Prowl and Evening Stroll

Saturday, 6-9pm

Nesting season comes early for owls and they're already hooting in anticipation. The trails will be open and patrolled tonight (bring a flashlight and buddy). At 7pm, the folks from Dickerson Park Zoo will be in the auditorium to give you a close-up look at Missouri's owls. You'll learn about how these incredible predators have mastered surviving in darkness. Families.

Little Acorns

Little Acorns programs are for children 3-6 years and are 45-minutes in length. Please limit Little Acorns programs to one per month. Registration required.

Calling All Owls

Who-o-o-o hoots when it gets dark? Who-o-o-o goes out for food at night? Is it a wise old owl? Get your children over to the nature center during daylight hours to learn about this nighttime bird.

Friday, January 7, 10am or 1pm

Wildlife In Winter

What happens to all the wild animals in winter? Some hibernate, of course, but we'll learn some other special "tricks" animals use to help them survive these frigid months.

Saturday, January 15, 11am or 1pm

Regal Eagles

Bald eagles are the kings of the sky. They are big, beautiful, and brawny. Come learn what other things make these special birds like royalty.

Wednesday, January 19, 10am or 1pm

Videos
are shown
every Sunday
from 2-3pm.



February Events

at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center

REGISTRATION

Call the nature center at **417/888-4237** on or after February 1 to register for February programs requiring registration. If you are unable to attend a program, please call to cancel so that someone on the waiting list may attend.

4 Ribbit & Roll Critter Rock Concert

Friday, 4-5pm or 7-8pm

The Critter Rock creators are back with an all new musical recipe! Combine the power and influence of melody with a child's fascination with nature. Stir in crazy actions, colorful media, and lively lyrics to upbeat tunes. Simmer together with Emmy Award-winning artists Jan and George Syrigos for a piping hot musical serving of nature's facts and features! Watch your kids absorb nature nutrients required for a healthy, balanced conservation education. Bon appetite! All ages. *Registration begins January 15.*

5 Conservaton Crew Glade Restoration

Saturday, 8am-2pm

We're making a return trip to Rocky Barrens Conservation Area for glade restoration by removing invading cedar trees. We need people to drag trees and branches to the wood chipper. Afterwards, you're welcome to take cedar chips for your landscaping needs. Meet at the nature center and carpool. Bring gloves, sturdy footwear, and dress for the weather. Lunch is provided. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

Hiked It . . . Liked It! Weekend Hike

Saturday, 9-11am

Enjoy a naturalist-guided hike. Families.



9 Story Time With Ms. Ladybug

Wednesday, 11-11:30am



Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story and shares activities with your 2-6 year olds.

11 Owl Prowl

Friday, 7-8:30pm

Nesting season comes early for owls, and they're already hooting in anticipation. Join us and the folks from Dickerson Park Zoo for a close-up look at live owls. After the indoor program, we'll head outside and try to call wild owls. Families. Registration required.

12 Bird In The Hand

Saturday, 7:30am-2pm

Join us for an up-close and personal look at the birds that visit our feeders. Bird bander and Conservation Department staff member Craig Hensley will be on hand to capture and band songbirds. You'll learn about chickadees, nuthatches, juncos, and other birds that call the nature center home during the winter months. Stop by anytime and stay as long as you'd like.

13 For Adults Only Waterfowl Identification

Sunday, 1-5pm

Learn the basics of waterfowl identification during an indoor session. Afterwards, test your new skills by visiting a few nearby areas to view ducks (and their relatives). Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

15 Prairie Dancers The Greater Prairie-Chicken

Tuesday, 7-8pm

The greater prairie-chicken lives its life and goes through its elaborate mating ritual on the prairies of Missouri in obscurity to the average Missourian. While their existence is threatened by the decrease in their prairie habitat, their habits and their plight to survive have been well-documented through the eyes and camera lens of Joplin Globe Photojournalist Noppadol Paothong. See his spectacular images and hear his firsthand accounts in this program cosponsored by the Greater Ozarks Audubon Society. Ages 10-adult. Registration required.

18 Just Wingin' It

Friday, 7-8pm

Sarah McCoy of Pittsburg State University takes their live birds of prey program on the road. Join us for an exciting evening of fine-feathered fun and information starring a variety of wonderful raptors. Families. Registration required.

20 Hiking Club Night Hike

Sunday, 3-9pm

If you enjoy quiet evening walks, then you'll enjoy this moonlit night hike lead by Volunteer Naturalist Sally Inskeep at Ruth and Paul Henning Conservation Area. Meet at the nature center and carpool. Bring water, a flashlight, and wear sturdy, comfortable hiking shoes. Hike is approximately four miles and of moderate difficulty. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

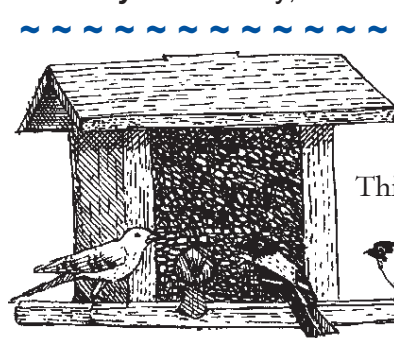
25 Family Fun Night Lewis & Clark Style

Friday, 6:30-9:30pm

Lewis & Clark and their team of intrepid explorers were among the first true *Survivors*. Long before reality TV shows provided a way for the average American to view the struggles of surviving in a harsh wilderness, *Fear Factor* was an everyday reality as they faced the unknown. Here's your chance to walk an evening in their moccasins as you experience a *Life Swap* with a member of the Corps of Discovery. Drop by anytime to see if you have what it takes to survive in wild Missouri, 1804 to 1806. Regardless of your success, everyone will be granted immunity! Families.

~~~~~  
**Hey, Conservation Kids' Club members:**

We will not be meeting this month. Instead, bring your family to **Family Fun Night: Lewis & Clark Style** on Friday, February 25.



## Great Backyard Bird Count

February 18 - 21

This is a joint project of Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology to create a map of winter bird distribution across North America. Help by counting birds in your backyard, local park, or other natural area on one or all four count days. Stop by the nature center and pick up a packet with data sheets and further information.

### 26 Conservation TEEN Club Vulture Venture

**Saturday, 11am-4pm**

We'll journey to the Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery in Branson for their annual "Vulture Venture" event which includes a live vulture program and wild vulture viewing. Afterwards, we'll hike a couple of short local trails. Lunch and transportation will be provided. Ages 12-17. Registration required.



**Saturday, February 26**

**Noon to 6pm**

**Shepherd of the Hills Fish Hatchery**  
Branson, MO

This award-winning program features a live vulture presentation, vulture games and trivia, and wild vulture viewing. In addition to presentations and handouts, a free original vulture sketch by Betty Grace will be given away. Betty's sketches are viewed each month in the *Missouri Conservationist* magazine. Be sure to stay until 5:30 to watch the evening "kettle" of vultures as over 100 vultures swoop over your head as they return to their roosts. For more information or directions, call 417/334-4865 ext 0.

## Little Acorns

Little Acorns programs are for children 3-6 years and are 45-minutes in length. Please limit Little Acorns programs to one per month. Registration required.

### Winter Woodpeckers

Many birds fly south for the winter, but not Missouri's wonderful woodpeckers. Bring your preschoolers and get warmed up to learning about these wild birds.

**Saturday, February 5, 10am or 1pm**

### Greet The Groundhog

It's February and time to celebrate groundhogs. Will spring be early or late? Only the shadow knows. Come out to learn about groundhogs and their shadows.

**Tuesday, February 8, 1pm**

**Thursday, February 10, 1pm or 3pm**

### 'Possum Trot

Where do opossums live? Do they swing by their tails? What do they have in common with dinosaurs? "Trot" on over to find out the answers to these questions as well as many others!

**Friday, February 11, 11am or 1pm**